

CONTROLLING THE FOOD SUPPLIES 1317

The increase achieved was very striking and immensely valuable. The wheat crop in England and Wales exceeded the average of the *Greatest* *just* ten years before the War by 59.3 per cent, and the oat crop was similarly greater by 38.5 per cent, and potatoes by 59.2 per cent. For the United Kingdom as a whole, the wheat crop of 1918 was 64.9 per cent greater than the pre-War average. The 1918 harvest was in fact by far the greatest that has been secured in this country for over the past sixty years.

It would have been far greater still if the weather in the latter part of 1918 had lived up to its early promise.

But the early summer was cold and July was very wet with a handicap in

on harvest some damage to crops through the heavy storms. August brought favourable weather in the South of England, where the bulk of the harvest was secured in good season and condition, but September was again very wet, and in the Midlands and North, in Scotland and Ireland, the harvest season turned out to be one of the very worst on record. The corn could not be carried, and a great deal of it sprouted in the fields. Heroic efforts were made to save it. In the crisis, the Home Defence Force was called on for every available man, and the landworkers, reinforced by the help of some 70,000 soldiers and 30,000 prisoners of war, were out

whenever weather permitted, aided by
all the
mechanical resources—tractors, reapers
and binders,
and so on—that the efforts of the Food
Production
Department could provide. More than
four-fifths of
the largest harvest of modern times was
thus rescued
in the teeth of one of the worst seasons
imaginable.
If the achievements of the winter and
spring sowing